

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE RISE OF CHINA AND AMERICA'S GRAND STRATEGIC RIPOSTE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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In making the case for an American grand strategy, this paper attempts to offer firstly a look at China's exceptional "Peaceful Rise" most ably demonstrated by its phenomenal economic growth since the country's "opening up" in 1978. Secondly, this paper will detail what is purported to be China's "grand strategy" for rising to great power status while attempting concurrently to engender a multipolar world order more conducive to Beijing's desires. Thirdly, this study will detail current U.S. policy regarding Taiwan and its central role as the primary nexus of potential future conflict with the PRC. Finally, this paper will lay out the imperative for developing a comprehensive American "grand strategy" focusing on China concluding by making recommendations as to the content of such a strategy.



## THE RISE OF CHINA AND AMERICA'S GRAND STRATEGIC RIPOSTE

Today only one country can provide the leadership to integrate, modernize, and constrain China. And that country is the United States<sup>1</sup>

The rise of the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) is the most critical strategic issue facing the United States in the future. Today, the U.S. lacks a "grand strategy" that lays out in clear terms how it will manage the rise of China and preclude it from displacing America from its current position in the unipolar international order. What the U.S. needs is a long term comprehensive "grand strategy" specifically designed to manage the rise of China that is in keeping with our vital national interests and values as articulated in the National Security Strategy of the United States (NSS).<sup>2</sup>

Since September 11, 2001 the United States has been at war with enemy forces in the form of terrorists who seek the destruction of the American way of life. The U.S. has responded to this challenge with the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and produced a grand strategy that has been the beneficiary of an unheralded effort from every organ of the government. This effort produced not only an effective strategy, but an operational plan for achieving victory.<sup>3</sup> That strategy and plan have been resourced appropriately and today we are seeing the tangible benefits.

While the GWOT preoccupies American strategy makers and planners today, the future implications of a resurgent China loom ever more clearly on America's strategic horizon. The United States has entered a period vis-à-vis China without historical precedent in its national life. In achieving the position of "lone superpower", the U.S. finds itself in the situation of having to determine how it should go about managing the "rise of China" as a potential peer competitor. America's lack of a focused grand strategy, one that spells out how the U.S. will deal with all of the complexities of the relationship between the two countries needlessly places the nation at risk. Strategic drift by the United States at this critical moment allows China to continue to pursue its grand strategy unchallenged. Thus, having effectively planned and set into motion its strategic vision for the defeat of terrorism, it is now time for the United States to turn its full attention toward crafting a grand strategy focused on China.

The necessity of such a grand strategy would seem self apparent, yet one does not exist. A review of the historical record reveals America's China strategy as really nothing more than its Taiwan policy. This policy, doubling as "strategy", has meandered dangerously between significant events such as the Tiananmen Square massacre and the Straits crisis of 1996 bounded only by the U.S. pledge to defend Taiwan and the People's Republic of China's

commitment to cross-strait reunification. China however, does not suffer from this strategic malaise and has mapped out its grand strategy for rising to great power status. China's grand strategy is comprehensive incorporating all the elements of national power directed at achieving a specific goal. Thus, China's "grand strategy" has immense implications for U.S. power and "primacy". Emerging in the mid 1990's, China's grand strategy is in play and has been garnering strategic benefits for China since its inception. These strategic benefits are evident in the form of increased international clout for China as well as in military capabilities and economic power. If allowed to go unchecked, this strategy is intended to result in China's rise to great power status while concurrently ushering in a bipolar or multi polar international order with the attendant diminution of American power and influence.

The complexity and significance of a comprehensive grand strategy for China demands the development of a stand alone strategic concept that guides appropriate American actions commensurate with vital U.S. interests. While the NSS lays out in broad general terms America's strategic aims in the world, a focused China grand strategy must articulate how the U.S., in a synchronized fashion, will manage the rise of the PRC. A model for such a strategic document and process is the now famous "Report to the National Security Council" or NSC 68 as it has become known. This grand strategic document articulated the U.S. strategy for dealing with the challenge posed by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, China is not the Soviet Union, though it could supplant this former Cold War adversary as America's sole strategic competitor in the future. What this paper advocates is not a return to Cold War, but an emulation of the strategic clarity, forethought, and processes used during that period to effectively guide American policy in dealing with a potential peer competitor over several decades. America's consistency in its approach to managing China's rise and dealing effectively with the PRC's grand strategy is crucial in maintaining American "primacy" while concurrently lessening the dangers of war.

In making the case for an American grand strategy, this paper attempts to offer firstly a look at China's exceptional "Peaceful Rise" most ably demonstrated by its phenomenal economic growth since the country's "opening up" in 1978. Secondly, this paper will detail what is purported to be China's "grand strategy" for rising to great power status while attempting concurrently to engender a multipolar world order more conducive to Beijing's desires. Thirdly, this study will detail current U.S. policy regarding Taiwan and its central role as the primary nexus of potential future conflict with the PRC. Finally, this paper will lay out the imperative for developing a comprehensive American "grand strategy" focusing on China concluding by making recommendations as to the content of such a strategy.

### China's Rise

China has blazed a new strategic path that suits its national conditions while conforming to the tides of history. This path toward modernization can be called the development path to a peaceful rise...The most significant strategic choice the Chinese have made was to embrace economic globalization rather than detach themselves from it.<sup>5</sup>

China's exceptional "Peaceful Rise", a self applied term that is meant to calm foreign fears of potentially aggressive Chinese behavior, is most ably demonstrated by its phenomenal economic growth since the country's "opening up" in 1978.<sup>6</sup> China's future potential as a peer competitor of the United States is based primarily on its authoritarian form of government and its economic potential. This potential has been increasingly harnessed to pay for military capabilities that will one day give China the ability to challenge the United States in East Asia. Additionally, China's grand strategy is predicated on its economy that, if managed properly, will not only increase Beijing's clout but also usher in a multi polar international political environment, thus significantly diminishing U.S. power globally.

Since China began liberalizing its economy its efforts have been rewarded with unprecedented growth. The statistics speak for themselves:

Since starting to open up and reform its economy in 1978, China has averaged 9.4 percent annual GDP growth, one of the highest growth rates in the world. In 1978 it accounted for less than one percent of the world's economy, and its total foreign trade was worth \$ 20.6 billion. Today it accounts for four percent of the world's economy and has foreign trade worth \$851 billion- the third largest total in the world.<sup>7</sup>

In just over 25 years, China has transformed itself from a nation practicing "economic self reliance" to one of the leading export nations of the world.<sup>8</sup>

Along with this unprecedented economic growth has come equally significant political shifts on the international scene. The bipolar political nature of international politics that dominated world affairs was transcended by America's rise as the sole remaining superpower upon the collapse of the Soviet Union. The failure of economic communism, as manifested by Russia's implosion, served as a wake up call for Beijing. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was determined in the wake of these events that not only would the regime not cede power, but it would assiduously avoid those political missteps that doomed the Soviets. Possibly sparked by the pro- democracy riots of 1989 and the now infamous Tiananmen Square massacre, China rapidly liberalized segments of its economy, thus giving its restive people an outlet for their energies. The CCP's liberalizing of the economy has been rewarded handsomely in that the people have focused their energies on capitalist pursuits such as building businesses instead of

attempting to alter the political order. Whether the rise of a middle class in China becomes a destabilizing issue for the CCP will be something for observers to watch closely. Unprecedented actions once unthinkable in China have taken place that seek to incorporate communist entrepreneurs within the CCP. During the most recent Party congress, the CCP Constitution was changed in order to allow business owners to join the party. This is a remarkable development when one considers that it was this same class of individuals that were executed in large numbers during the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

A further indication of Chinese economic development has come in the information technology sector. "A dozen years ago China barely had mobile telecommunications services. Now it claims more than 300 million mobile phone subscribers, more than any other nation. As of June 2004, nearly 100 million people had access to the internet.<sup>9</sup> In world financial markets, the growth of Chinese assets has been unprecedented. Financial estimates today project that China will have at its disposal over one trillion dollars in foreign reserves by 2007, an amount never before reached by any nation.

Another example of the economic opportunities resident in China is reflected in consumer spending driving record increases in foreign imports to China. "A few figures illustrate China's current contribution to global trade, China's imports from Association of South East Asian Nations increased by 33.1 percent, from Japan by 27.3 percent, from India by 80 percent, from the European Union by 28 percent and from the United States by 31.9 percent."<sup>10</sup> Presently, Chinese economic policy makers are setting equally bold goals for economic development for the Chinese economy at large, while attempting to concurrently deal with systemic challenges. Recently, Zheng Bijian, the Chair of the China Reform Council laid out China's future internal economic plans designed to deal with its shortage of natural resources, environmental pollution and degradation and the lack of coordination between economic development and social development:<sup>11</sup>

The policies the Chinese government has been carrying out, and will continue to carry out, in the face of these three great challenges can be summarized as three grand strategies—or "three transcendences." The first strategy is to transcend the old model of industrialization and to advance a new one. China is instead determined to forge a new path of industrialization based on technology, economic efficiency, and low consumption of natural resources relative to the size of its population, low environmental pollution, and the optimal allocation of human resources... The second strategy is to transcend the traditional ways for great powers to emerge, as well as the Cold War mentality that defined international relations along ideological lines. The third strategy is to transcend outdated modes of social control and construct a harmonious socialist society. The functions of the Chinese government have been gradually transformed, with self governance supplementing state administration.<sup>12</sup>



China's expanding economy has created the paradigm that requires continued economic growth in order to fuel development, while concurrently occupying its still growing populace at work. Perhaps the most distressing scenario feared by Chinese leaders is an economic slow-down causing massive unemployment and creating destabilizing effects for the country. China's economic rise, while strengthening the country, has created issues with regard to the resources required to support continued growth.

For all of China's economic dynamism, several issues of potential concern are worth noting. These issues center mainly on resource challenges that impact on the country's ability to maintain its rapid rate of growth. Resource shortfalls will drive China to greater efforts exterior to the country to secure things such as energy to fuel its economy. This hunt for resources has the potential of putting China at odds with many of its neighbors as it scours the globe looking for the commodities it needs to maintain its people and economic growth. "China has a population of 1.3 billion...And China's population has not yet peaked; it is not projected to decline until it reaches 1.5 billion in 2030."<sup>13</sup> Further exacerbating the issue, "China's per capita water resources are one-fourth the amount of the world's average, and its per capita area of cultivatable farm land is 40 percent of the world's average. China's oil, natural gas, copper, and aluminum resources in per capita terms amount to 8.3 percent, 4.1 percent, and 9.7 percent of the respective world averages."<sup>14</sup> While China's economy remained dormant, these disparities were of little concern, but as China's economy grows, demands for these types of resources will likely put China in contention with other powers. The most volatile resource disparity that faces China is its need for energy. "Twenty years ago, China was East Asia's largest oil exporter. Now it is the world's second-largest importer; last year, it alone accounted for 31 percent of global growth in oil demand. Now that China is the workshop of the world, its hunger for electricity and industrial resources has soared."<sup>15</sup>

Justin Yifu Lin, director of the China Center for Economic Research at Peking University, in Beijing, says the country's economy could grow at 9 percent a year for the next twenty years.<sup>16</sup> Consistent with this belief, planners have established goals as outlined below:

The Chinese government has set up targets for development for the next 50 years. This period is divided into three stages. In the first stage—2000—2010—total GDP is to be doubled. In the second stage, ending in 2020, total GDP is to be double again, at which point China's per capita GDP is expected to reach \$3,000. In the third, from 2020 to 2050, China will continue to advance until it becomes prosperous, democratic, and civilized socialist country.<sup>17</sup>

While continued growth is considered essential for regime stability, an economic down turn could be disastrous if not managed extremely well.

These new needs already have serious implications for China's foreign policy. Beijing's access to foreign resources is necessary both for continued economic growth and, because growth is the cornerstone of China's social stability, for the survival of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Since China remains a relatively centralized, government-driven economy, Beijing has been able to adapt its foreign policy to its domestic development strategy. Traditional institutions, such as the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group of the CCP, are still making the key decisions, but a more pluralistic environment is emerging and allowing business leaders to help shape foreign policy.<sup>18</sup>

Whether political liberalization allowing China to become democratic is feasible or not, remains to be seen. Considering the CCP's demonstrated policies of repression in support of social order and the maintenance of a one party government system, it would seem to be seriously in doubt. One thing is certain, China's exceptional growth since 1978 clearly holds both promise and challenges. As we will see, Chinese grand strategy formulation has anticipated the need for continued growth and sought to position itself in such a way as to be able to continue its development with minimal interruption while continuing toward its policy aims. This growth has helped the CCP weather the tempest of the prodemocracy movement while providing China with the economic capacity needed to revamp the military and fundamentally alter its grand strategy for the future.

#### China's Grand Strategy

Observe calmly; secure our position; cope with affairs calmly; hide our capacities and bide our time; be good at maintaining a low profile; never claim leadership...make some contributions.<sup>19</sup>

- Deng Xiaoping

In considering what is purported to be China's "grand strategy", we must first come to grips with what strategy is and what "grand strategy" entails. Additionally, we must then look to see how Chinese actions and pronouncements provide insights into discerning China's strategic roadmap for its long range intentions and grand strategy.

For consideration of what "grand strategy" is, we must first turn to B.H. Liddell Hart's thoughts since he is regarded as one of the foremost strategic theorists:

...the term "grand strategy" serves to bring out the sense of "policy in execution." For the role of grand strategy—higher strategy—is to coordinate and direct all the resources of a nation or a band of nations, towards the attainment of the political objective of the war—the goal defined by fundamental policy.

Grand strategy should both calculate and develop the economic resources and manpower of nations in order to sustain the fighting services. Also the moral resources—for to foster a peoples willing spirit is often as important as to

possess the more concrete forms of power. Grand strategy, too, should regulate the distribution of power between the several services, and between the services and industry. Moreover, fighting power is but one of the instruments of grand strategy—which should take account of and apply the power of financial pressure, of diplomatic pressure, of commercial pressure, and, not least of ethical pressure, to weaken the opponents will...grand strategy looks beyond the war to the subsequent peace. It should not only combine the various instruments, but regulate their use as to avoid damage to the future state of peace—for its security and prosperity.<sup>20</sup>

When considering Chinese strategic calculations, it is essential to understand the nature of strategy formulation in China as opposed to the United States. Within China, the PLA is considered to be the CCP's army as well as the "peoples army", thus strategy formulation by the military at the direction of the CCP serves the party and the state that are seen as synonymous. Understanding the concept that, "the Party is China and there can be no China without the Party" gives one a key insight as to why Taiwanese reunification is considered a "regime survival issue." The importance here is that as opposed to democratic states that formulate strategy and policy in a fairly open realm with the opinions of many actors both governmental and nongovernmental being taken into consideration, China's strategic development has a truncated nature that is relatively free of outside influence. Thus, China arguably has a greater ability to determine a strategic course and bring all the elements of national power to bear. This being said, it is important to note that the Chinese definition of grand strategy is very similar to what we understand from Liddell Hart's description above:

Chinese military strategists define grand strategy as "the overall strategy of a nation or alliance of nations in which they use overall national strength," to achieve political goals especially those related to national security and development.<sup>21</sup>

Having an overview of grand strategy leads us next to a consideration of what makes a strategy operative. Strategy can be defined in two interrelated ways:

Conceptually we define strategy as the relationship among ends, ways, and means. Alternatively, strategic art, broadly defined is therefore the skillful formulation, coordination, and application of ends (objectives), ways (courses of action) and means (supporting resources) to promote and defend the national interests.<sup>22</sup>

Strategy, and for the purpose of this discussion, grand strategy, must meet certain criteria in order for it to be effective. Grand strategy must be viewed through the objective lenses of suitability, acceptability, and feasibility.<sup>23</sup> Suitability tests whether a proposed strategy achieves the desired end. Acceptability tests ways or viability of a particular course of action. And finally, feasibility tests means or the resources required to achieve success."<sup>24</sup>

With these criteria in mind we must look at what is purported to be China's grand strategy for facilitating China's rise to great power status. Unlike the United States, China does not publish a "National Security Strategy" document that spells out its overall strategic interests and goals. This being the case, it is left to those who study China professionally to discern from China's actions and pronouncements what its actual grand strategy is. In this pursuit there are numerous individuals, both in and out of government, and in a host of academic institutions that have dedicated themselves to studying China. Over time, the outlines of China's current grand strategy have emerged. Dr. Avery Goldstein, Professor of Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania has produced perhaps the most cogent assessment of China's grand strategic design to date. He maintains that China, noting American strength militarily and economically, has opted for a grand strategic design that is "transitional" in nature.<sup>25</sup> This grand strategy is intended to get China through the next several decades by drawing as little attention to itself as possible, while concurrently pursuing its plan for a "peaceful rise" or "peaceful development." By establishing attractive economic linkages with U.S. and its allies, as well as partner nations, Beijing calculates that it will be able to leverage this economic influence when needed for support of issues important to China. This effort runs concurrent with Chinese diplomatic efforts that no longer eschew multilateral approaches to international issues as had once been the case. Chinese leadership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Six Party Talks relating to the North Korean nuclear issue are both emblematic of this new approach. In the long run, the nature of this strategy presents serious cause for concern as China continues to gain influence in the world. It should be expected that upon its rising to great power status, that China will attempt to significantly alter the status quo of the current international system. China seeks to rise to great power status while concurrently engendering a multipolar international world order. Clearly, the long term implications for the United States and its dominant position in East Asia, as well as its preeminent place in the current unipolar world order are profound.

While China claims vociferously that it is not a "threat", Chinese military expenditures have continued to rise annually at a rate of ten percent or more, on average, for more than a decade.<sup>26</sup> Combined with the ongoing missile buildup opposite Taiwan and the recent passage of the Anti-Secession Law, tensions over potential conflict in the Taiwan Straits remain high.

How it is that China came to decide on this strategy is of central importance, for it appears to be a strategy as Avery Goldstein described it as being designed to "play a weak hand well" in dealing with an overwhelmingly powerful America.<sup>27</sup> China's grand strategy began to coalesce in the mid 1990s taking into account several factors. The first factor considered was America's considerable military and political muscle, and that it appeared more and more willing to use

that strength to achieve its policy aims.<sup>28</sup> The second factor was China's relative weakness in light of America's demonstrated military capability.<sup>29</sup> Not only was it the size of America's military power but, its exceptional battlefield prowess in Desert Storm against Iraq as well as its response to the Taiwan Crisis of 1996 that convinced Beijing that China was militarily outclassed and would remain so for some time to come. This belief was further enhanced when the U.S. and NATO without U.N. sanction, went to war over Kosovo in Operation Allied Force<sup>30</sup>. In particular, U.S. strategic reach in the wake of the September 11th attacks, that allowed the military to overthrow both Afghanistan and Iraq at considerable distances from the U.S., further dramatized these capabilities. These dramatic examples of U.S. power only served to further enhance the conclusions of Chinese strategists that the U.S. would remain the dominant power for the foreseeable future. Thus, China's response, concurrent with its continuing economic growth, was to focus on key elements of the Chinese armed forces most likely to be needed in an attempt to regain Taiwan by force if required. China's having embarked on a military modernization program that revamps its structure, equipment, and doctrine so as to be able to fight future wars under "hi-tech conditions" was designed presumably to take on the United States in ways that will give it a better chance of success in such a confrontation.<sup>31</sup>

The third factor as outlined by Goldstein that influenced Chinese decision makers with regard to grand strategy formulation was the growing perception in the U.S. and the states of East Asia that China's militarily expansion constituted a threat. At the time, China's preference for bilateral relations and continued pursuit of resolution to territorial claims in the South China Sea served to fuel the negative reaction to China that it would ultimately seek to prevent. China's new strategy places greater emphasis on multilateral institutions for the resolution of such issues and is designed specifically to diminish the perception of a "China threat" in East Asia.

The fourth factor, also described by Goldstein, centered on China's longstanding position concerning reunification with Taiwan.<sup>32</sup> Taiwanese presidential elections scheduled for 1996 saw a spate of candidates from the Democratic Peoples Party that were loudly voicing their thoughts concerning independence. Beijing's effort to intimidate Taipei prior to the elections through the launch of ballistic missiles backfired when the U.S. responded forcefully, sending a pair of aircraft carriers steaming through the Taiwan Strait signaling U.S. resolve. The realization that the PLA might have to fight the U.S. as mismatched as it was, proved sobering in the extreme and resulted in efforts to develop asymmetric approaches to effectively deal with America's overwhelming strength if hostilities broke out.<sup>33</sup>

These factors having coalesced, China policy makers decided on a middle ground between “soft” and “hard” approaches to American power. This grand strategic approach, it was thought, would allow for continued economic development that was deemed crucial for national stability, while avoiding the directly confrontational aspects of policy that would surely result in the U.S. and its allies adopting a containment like strategy:

The confrontational alternative that [Chinese] critics of the partnership policy presented allegedly risked triggering a decisive shift by the United States toward a policy of Cold War-style containment. If this happened then an outclassed China, like the Soviet Union would face the prospect of “defeat without fighting.”<sup>34</sup>

China’s strategic emphasis became centered on a two pronged approach the first of which was to reduce tensions and fears fueling objection to China’s “peaceful rise”.<sup>35</sup> This was accomplished by China playing a more considered and responsible role in international affairs. By becoming an active participant in multilateral forums and behaving in a manner consistent with established international norms, China hoped to garner support in the world community for its positions:

Because China is the largest country in the world in terms of population, many difficult global questions cannot be settled without its participation. Thus China’s words and actions can hold the balance.<sup>36</sup>

During the Asian financial crisis, China saw its policy of responsible international behavior bear fruit as it was widely complimented for its currency stabilization efforts.<sup>37</sup> So too was China complimented on its actions in support of the nuclear test ban treaty when Pakistan detonated its first nuclear device. Additionally, China’s efforts in bringing the North Koreans to the negotiating table for the Six Party Talks was a major step toward “responsible international behavior” and was recognized as such.<sup>38</sup>

Concurrent with its more pragmatic and internationally responsible mode of behavior, China’s second prong was to begin to actively seek great power partnerships to include the United States. Chinese policy makers sought through these partnerships to foster linkages that would give them political leverage when they needed it.

Their top priority, therefore, was to ensure China’s interests while coping with the stark constraints of a unipolar world in which the potentially hostile United States would long remain the dominant power. This was the overriding concern that led Beijing to conclude that the cultivation of great power partnerships, especially one with the United States, should be a central feature of a prudent strategy for China. Partnerships would enable China to address its concerns about the U.S. preponderance without resorting to the more directly confrontational and given the array of international interests and capabilities...seemingly futile alternative of a straightforward attempt to counterbalance American power<sup>39</sup>

Chinese “strategic partnerships” were thus defined by a commitment to:

1) building stable bilateral relations without targeting any third party; 2) promoting extensive economic intercourse; 3) muting disagreements about domestic politics in the interest of working together on a matter of shared concern in international diplomacy; and 4) routinizing official visits, especially military to military exchanges and regular summit meetings between top government leaders.<sup>40</sup>

Though experiencing some highs-and-lows in its approach, China found that its grand strategy has worked as it was intended by garnering support, muting differences, and reducing the prospects for confrontation. Perhaps the greatest confirmation that Beijing’s grand strategy has worked as envisioned has come in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> Terrorist attacks on the United States:

As the Bush Doctrine took shape after 9/11, Washington placed top priority on fighting terrorism and preventing states hostile to American interest from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. In this new context, the “constructive and cooperative Sino-American relationship” forged during the summer and explicitly endorsed by President Bush in October of 2001, like the Clinton Administration’s “strategic partnership,” provided Beijing the opportunity to play a helpful if not decisive, role in addressing major American foreign policy concern.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, we can see that Chinese strategic formulation encompassing all the elements of national power have been crafted in such a way as to meet its strategic ends. The apparent suitability, feasibility, and acceptability of the approach has served to increase Chinese security, facilitate economic development, fuel military expansion, and has served to mute key differences in policy reducing the prospects for conflict:

Beijing’s Grand Strategy that emerged after the mid-1990s aimed not only to ensure the country’s security in a narrow sense, but also to facilitate China’s rise to great power status. The central challenge was to craft an approach that would make it possible during an era of American dominance in which both the United States and some of its Asian allies have the capability to complicate, if not completely frustrate China’s efforts. For Beijing success required a foreign policy that maintained a peaceful international environment in which China could proceed with the arduous task of domestic economic development on which national prosperity and strength ultimately depend.<sup>42</sup>

China’s grand strategy as executed also served to limit Taiwan’s options with regard to pursuing an independence agenda. Bilateral and multilateral linkages with key economic partners have served as intended to limit actions in support of Taiwan. What is most impressive is the manner in which it was accomplished. By applying an effective carrot-and-stick approach, China has managed to woo potential adversaries so that they have sought to constrain Taiwanese

behavior while attempting to intimidate Taipei and not appear to be weak to their domestic populace:

Coercive ambiguity served multiple purposes. By suggesting that Beijing's patience had its limits, the policy signaled the United States that were the risks of an American policy of increasing support for Taiwan (especially the sale of military equipment), which China saw as a key reason for Taipei's growing intransigence. By leaving open the question of the time frame for Beijing's patience, however, the policy allowed China's leaders to avoid putting their international reputation on the line, as they would if they set a true deadline for resolution and failed to act or acted and failed to accomplish their objectives a likely outcome for the immediate future). And by indicating that the regime retained the option to use force, the policy also enabled Beijing's leaders to save face domestically, since it did not require acknowledging that the exercise of restraint on Taiwan reflected fear of likely U.S. response.<sup>43</sup>

While China's grand strategy appears to be working and shows all the signs of being durable, there is still the very real potential for crisis and conflict over Taiwan. This remains true because of the independent variable of the Taiwanese themselves who have the potential through unilateral action, such as the recent decision to shut down the National Reunification Council, to force a showdown over the issue of independence. The United States has through its pronouncements attempted to make itself clear with regard to its policy concerning Taiwan and its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the issue. There are scenarios that could bring the United States into direct conflict with China over Taiwan for which all three parties have war plans. Thus, the current U.S. policy is meant to ensure all concerned act with restraint and avoid precipitous action. This brings us to a discussion of the U.S. strategic policy concerning Taiwan. America's current policy must serve as an element of a larger comprehensive grand strategy for managing China's rise to great power status by placing the issue of Taiwan in its proper context.

#### Taiwan Nexus

Continued support for the Taipei government by the United States places Taiwan directly between the U.S. and the PRC as a contentious issue that effects every aspect of our current relationship. China considers Taiwan reunification as a "vital national interest", and thus an issue over which it is willing to go to war. To truly underscore the importance of this issue, the Chinese Communist Party speaking for the PRC has said that Taiwan is a "regime survival issue." The recent passage of the Anti-Secession Law further demonstrates the PRC's seemingly unwaiverable commitment to reunification. Clearly, the issues for China are strategic in nature. Taiwanese reunification would go a long way to erase the last vestiges of China's perceived humiliation at the hands of Western powers. Additionally, if reunification could be



achieved at minimal cost, either militarily or diplomatically, the resulting benefit for China both economically and geostrategically would be almost incalculable. Unfettered access to the Pacific for China's growing blue water navy is just one example. Successful reunification would go a long way to helping China realize its overarching strategic goals not only in the region but the world at large. Considering the fact that both nations have war plans aimed at each other for either Taiwan's defense or seizure, it is essential to understand current U.S. policy in order to understand how it has influenced the shape of China's grand strategy.

The current United States policy regarding Taiwan was laid out clearly in April of 2004 during testimony to the House International Relations Committee. Delivered by James A. Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, his testimony provides in convincing terms what the current administration's position is. Mr. Kelly's remarks reiterated the elements of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) as well as clearly addressed both Beijing and Taipei on U.S. concerns so as to prevent miscalculations on the part of either party. The core principals of U.S. policy were articulated as such:

- The United States remains committed to our one China policy based on the three communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act;
- The U.S. does not support independence for Taiwan or unilateral moves that would change the status quo as we would define it;
- For Beijing, this means no use of force or threat of use of force against Taiwan. For Taipei, it means exercising prudence in managing all aspects of cross-Straits relations. For both sides, it means no statements or actions that would unilaterally alter Taiwan's status;
- The U.S. will continue the sale of appropriate defensive military equipment to Taiwan in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act; and
- Viewing any use of force against Taiwan with grave concern, we will maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion against Taiwan.<sup>44</sup>

In his prepared remarks Mr. Kelly went on to say that:

Our foremost concern is maintaining peace and stability in order to advance U.S. interests, spare the region the dangers of war, safeguard Taiwan's democracy, and promote China's constructive integration into the global community as well as the spread of personal freedom in China. Because the possibility for the United States to become involved in a cross-Straight conflict is very real, the president knows that American lives are potentially at risk. Our one-China policy reflects our abiding commitment to preserve peace in the Taiwan Strait so long as there are irreconcilable differences.<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, he went on to highlight the importance that the U.S. Government places on this issue:

The President and the senior leadership of this administration consistently make clear to Chinese leaders that the United States will fulfill its obligations to help Taiwan defend itself, as mandated in the Taiwan Relations Act. At the same time we have very real concerns that our efforts at deterring Chinese coercion might fail if Beijing ever becomes convinced Taiwan is embarked on a course toward independence and permanent separation from China, and concludes that Taiwan must be stopped in these efforts.<sup>46</sup>

Under the umbrella of security that the TRA has provided, Taiwan has prospered economically and politically. So too has the PRC profited from the stability fostered. The easing of restrictions by the government of Taiwan on travel and investing on the mainland has served as a large part of China's economic advancement. GDP growth within the PRC of nearly 10 percent a year over the past decade has been fueled in large measure due to Taiwanese direct investment and production in mainland China. However, ominous signs have been developing over the past decade that point to a much more muscular approach designed to steadily apply pressure and wear down Taiwan by the PRC in its bid to reunify.

U.S. policy on Taiwan and concurrent dealings with the PRC are meant to enhance America's core national interests of physical security, promotion of values, and economic prosperity by lessening the likelihood of war between Taiwan and the PRC.<sup>47</sup> Core U.S. interests of preserving American security, bolstering American prosperity, and promoting American values, has been consistent across the continuum of strategy from that designed to contain communism through today's efforts to maintain American primacy in the post Cold War world.

Today, the U.S. enjoys positive relations with both Taiwan and Beijing while both of their economies continue to grow. The development of a full-blown democracy on Taiwan further reinforces American interests and efforts with regard to promoting freedom and democracy as essential elements of American values and a cornerstone of its foreign policy. These efforts are in keeping with traditional American strategic culture as outlined by Col Anita Arms USAF (ret).<sup>48</sup> Additionally, Mr. Kelly reinforced that notion when he said, "we applaud the success of democracy in Taiwan and the dedication of Taiwan's people to the rule of law. This position is consistent with the deeply held values of the American people."<sup>49</sup>

For all of its success in preventing war, America's policy is myopic and focused almost exclusively on Taiwan instead of on the larger issue of China's strategic aims vis-a-vis the U.S. With regard to Taiwan and the TRA U.S. policy still suffers from some residual ambiguity that could be successfully addressed in a comprehensive grand strategy. As previously mentioned

recent policy statements have been used to clarify areas where miscalculation could plunge the region into an avoidable conflict:

While strongly opposing the use of force by the PRC, we must also acknowledge with a sober mind what the PRC leaders have repeatedly conveyed about China's capabilities and intentions. The PRC refuses to renounce the use of force regarding Taiwan despite our consistent representations stating they should do so. PRC leaders state in explicit terms that China considers Taiwan a "vital national interest" and that the PRC would take military action in the event that Taiwan declares independence. While we strongly disagree with the PRC's approach, and see military coercion as counter-productive to China's stated intent to seek a peaceful outcome, it would be irresponsible of us and of Taiwan's leaders to treat these statements as empty threats.<sup>50</sup>

However, recent actions by the PRC, namely the passing of the "Anti-Secession Law", continue to underscore China's avowed willingness to resort to force if it feels compelled to do so in order to reunify China and Taiwan.<sup>51</sup> Such a decision would most likely be predicated on language resident in the ASL that states "should ...possibilities for a peaceful reunification...be exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity."<sup>52</sup> This serves to underscore the precarious nature of Taiwan's position and further reinforces the need to unambiguously signal U.S. intentions. Clarity in U.S. strategy is essential in minimizing risk as not only the PRC continues to grow and modernize its forces opposite Taiwan but also as Taipei demonstrates volatile behavior such as dissolving the National Reunification Council. Here too the U.S. has sought to clarify for the government of Taiwan its position so as to avoid misunderstanding:

The U.S. strongly supports Taiwan's democracy, including the right of its people to elect their leaders and make the full range of decisions about their security, economy, foreign relations, and other issues. But we do not support Taiwan independence. A unilateral move toward independence will avail Taiwan of nothing it does not already enjoy in terms of democratic freedom, autonomy, prosperity, and security...Realistically, such moves carry the potential for a response from the PRC- a dangerous, objectionable, and foolish response-that could destroy much of what Taiwan has built and crush its hopes for the future. It would damage China too. We in the United States see these risks clearly and trust they are understood by President Chen Shui-bian and others in Taiwan...There are uncomfortable realities, yet they are a fact with which we must grapple. As Taiwan proceeds with efforts to deepen democracy, we will speak clearly and bluntly if we feel as though those efforts carry the potential to adversely impact U.S. security interests or have the potential to undermine Taiwan's own security.<sup>53</sup>

The United States cannot blithely back away from its current policy position without inviting PRC intervention in Taiwan, nor can it do so for the sake of its credibility throughout the region and the world. In an area where the vast majority of U.S. relationships are bilateral ones,

the United States cannot be perceived as willing to abandon its friends for political expediency, or out of fear of potential conflict. Looking long term at the rise of China over the coming decades, it appears self evident that maintenance of our policy as an aspect of a comprehensive strategy serves as a hindrance to longer term Chinese prospects of regional hegemony, or ambitions of becoming a peer competitor of the United States. As long as Taiwan remains a viable entity outside of the PRC's control, Chinese efforts at expanding its sphere of influence far beyond its shores will be limited to some degree. Furthermore, the longer the Taiwanese and mainland Chinese interact with each other via commerce and exchanges, the greater the opportunity for democratic principles to permeate mainland Chinese society. A free, democratic, and prosperous China would better serve the needs of its people than a totalitarian regime willing to use all of its coercive power to stifle dissent and potentially become a threat to its neighbors. Clearly, China, with a population of nearly 1.5 billion people by 2030, would be less threatening to its neighbors if she were led by a democratically elected government, and possessed a civilian controlled military. In order to bring this about the United States clearly needs a comprehensive grand strategy for managing China's rise so as to mitigate the destabilizing effects of continued tensions over Taiwan coupled with and its continued military modernization and expansion.

#### American Grand Strategy

Thus what is of supreme importance in war is to attack the enemy's strategy.<sup>54</sup>

Of the major and emerging powers, China has the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States and field disruptive military technologies that could over time offset traditional U.S. military advantages absent U.S. counter strategies.<sup>55</sup>

Having discussed the intricacies of strategy; its formulation and tests for efficacy, as well as China's version of grand strategy, it is appropriate to now turn to a consideration of developing an American version specifically tailored to China. The U.S. will have to face some extremely hard decisions in the not too distant future with regard to our policies in Asia for the coming decades. If the United States desires to maintain "primacy" in a unipolar world order, it must shape the international environment so as to avoid the advent of bipolarity or even multipolarity as an ordering principle for the world. The decision to maintain primacy then is an essential element for future American strategy formulation.

The loss of influence in the world on such issues as regional stability, advancing democracy, human rights, and respect for international norms, may serve as the political imperative to spark resistance to Chinese efforts to displace American influence. At a

minimum, the prospect alone should propel efforts at the development of an American grand strategy focused on China that incorporates and synchronizes all the elements of national power, those being diplomatic, informational, military and economic. What should be of the greatest concern strategically is that while the United States has a policy for Taiwan it does not have a comprehensive grand strategy designed to address the multitude of implications that China's grand strategy presents.

As we have seen, the Chinese grand strategy deliberately avoids many of the pitfalls that were resident in Soviet strategy, thus making it harder to counter. If the United States fails to establish a grand strategic approach to China, it may well find its international position significantly eroded. America's position today in the world is unique in that it sits at the summit of a unipolar world order generally favorable to its values. Unless the U.S. develops a comprehensive strategy, we face the prospect of a peer competitor with a very alien form of government, strategic culture, and value set that does not comport with our own. It is imperative that the United States immediately begin to formulate a long term strategy designed to deal with all aspects of China's rise to great power status.

The effort at grand strategic formulation must be from across the interagency and include all the organs of government much like the process that resulted in the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism and the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq. Along with strategic initiatives like the now famous NSC 68, the process must be comprehensive, taking into account the full range of issues and implications China's rise portends for American power not just in the Straits of Taiwan but the world at large. As mentioned earlier we currently have components of a grand strategy for China. These components reside in pieces between such documents as the National Security Strategy that devotes a mere page and a half to discussing China. Additionally, other pieces of an American grand strategy can be found in the Quadrennial Defense Review, The National Military Strategy of the United States and the U.S. Pacific Command's Theater Strategy for the Pacific as well as in associated war plans. Furthermore, within law such as that resident in the Taiwan Relations Act, there are elements essential to a larger strategy. Unfortunately all of these examples are unconnected with an overarching mandate and vision for their ultimate objective, that being the management of China's rise and the maintenance of American primacy. Clearly, there needs to be an overarching document that lays out a grand strategic approach to U.S.-Sino relations. This product should be a stand alone document that, while dovetailing with core American strategic principles, as they are articulated in the National Security Strategy, has a singular focus on effectively managing China's growth, diplomatically, informationally, militarily and economically.

This grand strategy should be formed around the core concept of “conengagement” a term that connotes the blending of “containment” strategy with “engagement.”<sup>56</sup> This strategic approach looks for mutually beneficial opportunities for cooperation while concurrently seeking to contain and thwart the negative influences of the party being “contained”. Since Beijing’s strategic approach has been specifically tailored to prevent containment, those elements of U.S. strategy that attempt to hem in negative aspects of Chinese power will divert its focus from other areas potentially more harmful to U.S. interests. In areas of cooperation, such as economic development and public diplomacy, there is the potential to further American interests with regard to fostering the rule of law, respect for human rights, and democratic norms. Specifically, a conengagement strategy would effectively address key elements of China’s grand strategic concept are aimed at subtly establishing influence over American friends and allies as well as with the United States itself designed to hamstring efforts in countering Chinese interests.

The military component of a conengagement strategy while maintaining the capacity to defeat China would seek to engage the Chinese military in ways that foster greater transparency in their force development and modernization. Military to military contacts as well as cross cultural military education would allow for a deeper penetration of American democratic ideals and the role of the military in a democratic society. These efforts would be aimed at transforming the role of the PLA from a party army to one whose allegiance is to its civilian masters and the state instead of a political party. Efforts along these lines have proven transformational within militaries of the former Warsaw Pact and throughout the world. Concurrently, such actions would provide a greater degree of transparency on China’s military and defense related issues. Greater insight into the inner workings of China’s defense establishment would go a long way towards clarifying China’s true intentions and could serve as a significant confidence building measure.

With regard to the thorny issue of Taiwan, our strategy to support peaceful reunification and maintain the status quo must be a policy component of the larger grand strategy. An aspect of that grand strategy should clearly declare a “no return to status quo ante” policy with regard to Taiwan in case of conflict. While primarily aimed at China, this policy would state that which ever side breached the peaceful reunification mandate, that the U.S. would intervene politically and or militarily on behalf of the aggrieved party. As such, if China attempted to coerce Taiwan, or did in fact invade, the U.S. would respond to eject them. Additionally, under the “no return to status quo ante” policy, the U.S. would immediately recognize Taiwan as a sovereign and independent nation. Furthermore, under this policy component of a grand strategy, the U.S. would pledge to enter into a mutual defense treaty in order to further protect

Taiwan. Conversely, if Taiwan unilaterally declared independence or acted in such a way as to establish de facto status as an independent state, the U.S. would declare its obligations under the TRA would be null and void. As such, the United States would not come to Taiwan's defense due to its violation of the peaceful reunification mandate. Such strategic action by the United States would serve as an impetus to freeze the military build up by China facing Taiwan, allowing it to channel moneys now spent on defense modernization into its economic development. Additionally, this policy component would arrest Taiwanese independence efforts. Furthermore, this policy component of a grand strategy would seek to defuse the most volatile issue between the U.S. and China. This would demonstrate our commitment to reunification but only under peaceful means while maintaining in Taiwan a vibrant democracy and economic engine capable of engendering democratic reforms facilitated by cross-Strait trade and exchanges.

An additional component that should be added as an element of our strategy, is one advocated by Mr. William Kristol in his testimony before the same House committee where Mr. Kelly spoke. He advocated an aspect of policy whereby the United States actively sought to encourage democratic reforms within mainland China itself. "America's policy toward China is insufficiently directed toward democratizing China, and so long as that is true, it will be more difficult to help Taiwan's democracy survive."<sup>57</sup> A particularly strong public diplomacy effort aimed at heightening awareness of democracy and democratic principles throughout China, would not only be consistent with American strategic culture, but would help pave the way for Democratic change in the PRC thus presumably lessening the opportunities for conflict between the U.S. and China.

With the aforementioned in mind, it is clear that development of a China specific grand strategy provides a methodology for uniting the aims of disparate arms of the government and focusing national effort on this critical security issue for the future. Failure to do so will mean that strategic formulation and policy execution will continue to meander as they have in the past, ceding valuable time to the Chinese as they continue to refine and execute their grand strategy for rising to great power status.

### Conclusion

The intention of this paper has been to point out China's growing strength, and reveal its grand strategy and concept for future growth. That China's rise possesses significant strategic implications for the United States is self evident. The potential to fundamentally alter the international balance of power and help usher in a multipolar world construct should be a

fundamental issue of concern for U.S. policy makers. More importantly, this paper has sought to highlight the critical need for a comprehensive American grand strategy designed to effectively manage the rise of China as it drives toward becoming a peer competitor. While highlighting that the components of such a strategy are readily at hand, it is imperative that strong leadership at the highest level direct the task be accomplished by providing clear direction and mandating its execution. China's rise and its unprecedented implications for American primacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should not deter us from putting forth the intellectual effort to craft an appropriate grand strategy. Neither should the fact that we currently have a policy concerning Taiwan delude us into believing a grand strategy for China is not required. As NSC 68, and most recently the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism and the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq have demonstrated, when faced with an enormous challenge requiring strategic formulation, Americans are clearly up to the task.

As articulated within, an American grand strategy built around the concept of "congagement"<sup>68</sup> that melds the most effective elements of "containment" and "engagement" is the one that holds greatest potential for mitigating the most problematical aspects of China's rise while concurrently dissuading military competition and engendering greater democratic reforms within China.<sup>69</sup> Congagement plays to America's strengths in the realms of both hard and soft power, and are both areas where the U.S. today holds a preponderant advantage. The maintenance of American "primacy" facilitated by a comprehensive strategy of congagement that fully incorporates and synchronizes all the elements of national powers should be the central goal of its grand strategy.

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